

Workforce Supply

- **Unemployment is low, but the county has a large 51,400-strong available labor pool, that includes almost 42,800 underemployed workers who are looking for better jobs.**

The underemployed are willing to commute farther and longer. For the one-way commute, 55 percent are prepared for 20 or more minutes longer and 38 percent will go 20 or more extra miles.

Labor Force	182,636
Employed	174,094
Underemployment rate	24.6%
Number of underemployed workers	42,827
Unemployed	8,542
Available labor pool	51,369

Note: Based on August 2005 labor force data.

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

- **In 2000, 21,100 commuted into the county for work, compared to 13,200 residents who worked outside the county.**

About 60 percent of in-commuters came from Baldwin County and almost 40 percent of out-commuters work in Mississippi. While providing workers for the county, the high level of commuting can cause congestion on roads and highways.

- **The high level of commuting suggests that roads and highways must be maintained properly to ensure uninterrupted movement of workers and not slow economic development.**

Impeded movement of workers can slow economic development. The one-way commute takes less than 20 minutes for 59 percent of workers, but more than 40 minutes for 8 percent. A little over 3 percent of residents spend more than an hour to get to work. The commute is less than 10 miles for 47 percent of workers; about 16 percent of workers travel more than 25 miles one-way and 6 percent exceed 45 miles.

- **Mobile County has similar educational attainment, but lower population growth than the state.**

Of the age 25 and over population, 75 percent are high school graduates and 19 percent hold bachelor's or higher degrees in Alabama. Mobile County has 77 percent high school graduates and nearly 19 percent bachelor's or higher degree holders. The county population fell by half a percent from 2000-2004, but grew nearly 2 percent for the state. The 2000-2010 projected population growth is 1.8 percent for the county and 8.8 percent for Alabama.

Workforce Demand

- **The top five employers in the county are: retail trade; health care and social assistance; educational services; manufacturing; and administrative and support and waste management and remediation services.**

These sectors provided 85,569 jobs, about 53 percent of the county total in second quarter 2004. Manufacturing, educational services, and health care and social assistance all had average monthly wages that were above the \$2,633 countywide average.

- **On average about 9,600 jobs were created per quarter from second quarter 2001 to second quarter 2004; average quarterly net job flows was about 500.**

Job creation is the number of new jobs that are created either by new area businesses or through expansion of existing firms. Net job flows reflect the difference between current and previous employment at all businesses.

- **Six occupations are both high-demand and fast-growing:** Home Health Aides; Counter and Rental Clerks; Security Guards; Receptionists and Information Clerks; Customer Service Representatives; and Truck Drivers, Light or Delivery Services.

The top five high-demand occupations are Cashiers; Retail Salespersons; Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers; Waiters and Waitresses; and Registered Nurses. The top five fast-growing occupations are Home Health Aides; Medical Assistants; Medical Records and Health Information Technicians; Social and Human Service Assistants; and Computer Software Engineers.

- **The top 50 highest earning occupations are mainly in health, legal, management, engineering, computer, and postsecondary education fields.**

These occupations mostly require bachelor's or higher degrees. Six health, three management, and one legal occupation make up the top 10.

- **Fast-growing or high-demand occupations are generally not high-earning.**

Of 34 selected high-demand, 33 selected fast-growing, and 50 selected high-earning occupations, only one occupation, General and Operations Managers, is both high-earning and in high-demand. Six occupations are both high-earning and fast-growing: Computer Software Engineers; Sales Managers; Computer and Information Systems Managers; Pharmacists; Management Analysts; and Sales Representatives, Wholesale & Manufacturing, Technical & Scientific Products.

Workforce Investment Advisory Areas



- Employment is currently growing faster than labor force and population.

Implications for Workforce Development

- **The county's labor force must grow faster to meet workforce demand either by increasing the participation rate, growing population, or both.**

Workforce development initiatives that tackle this challenge might (i) focus on hard-to-serve populations (e.g. out-of-school youth and illiterate adults), (ii) help communities gain new residents, and (iii) facilitate in-commuting. Hard-to-serve populations are often outside of the mainstream economy, poor, and have difficulty finding work. They are potential labor force participants and some investment in training, transportation, child care, infrastructure, etc. may be needed to tap this resource. Increasing population is generally more beneficial to communities than in-commuting, but requires investment in amenities and infrastructure to support the growth. Facilitating in-commuting should be a short-term strategy because it can worsen traffic.

- **Economic development should target high-earning industries and workforce development should ensure availability of workers for such industries.**

High-demand and high-growth occupations are common to the two leading, but not high wage, employment sectors. Economic development should aim to diversify and strengthen the county economy by retaining, expanding, and attracting more high-wage providing industries. Workforce development efforts should prepare workers for these industries.

- **Training in basic skills is very important, but high-earning jobs need resource management, complex problem solving, and systems skills as well.**

Basic skills are important for high-demand, high-growth, and high-earning jobs. This highlights a need for training in such skills. Ideally, all high school graduates should possess basic skills so that postsecondary and higher education can focus on other and more complex skills while enhancing these basic skills. Employers should be an integral part of planning for training as they can help to identify future skill needs and any existing gaps.

- **A highly educated and productive workforce is a critical economic development asset.**

Skill and education requirements for jobs keep rising. There is therefore a very strong need to raise educational attainment in the county. Although this presents challenges to workforce development, it also presents opportunities for economic development through workforce development activities that involve postsecondary and higher education institutions. Higher incomes to graduates from these institutions would help to raise personal income for the county. Raising personal income by improving educational attainment and technological skills for a county that has low population and labor force growth rates is an effective economic development strategy. Thus, workforce development should continuously educate individuals, the public, and legislators about the private and social returns from education. This strategy will encourage individuals to seek to raise their own educational attainment level and also promote public support for education.

- **Ongoing worker retraining programs should be continued and enhanced.**

Alabama has a number of tools to assess, retrain, and place dislocated workers, especially those affected by outsourcing. These programs should be continued to ensure that the labor force participation rate does not fall.

- **Together, workforce development and economic development can build a strong and well-diversified county economy. Indeed, one cannot achieve success without the other.**

Mobile County LWIA

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